

Here's To A New Life

Posted originally on the [Archive of Our Own](http://archiveofourown.org/works/1815466) at <http://archiveofourown.org/works/1815466>.

Rating:	General Audiences
Archive Warning:	No Archive Warnings Apply
Category:	F/M
Fandom:	Kill la Kill
Relationship:	Matoi Ryuuko/Sanageyama Uzu
Characters:	Matoi Ryuuko , Sanageyama Uzu , Mikisugi Aikurou , Kinagase Tsumugu
Additional Tags:	Alternate Universe , Alternate Universe - Medieval , Theft , Fights , Friendship
Language:	English
Stats:	Published: 2014-06-20 Words: 7,069 Chapters: 1/1

Here's To A New Life

by [RaeRaePapaya](#)

Summary

Prequel to Follow My Lead

Ryuko pulled her red scarf closer to her face, her blue eyes scanning the crowds. Her eyes narrowed, landing in a middle aged man with a brown cap on his head. He was wealthy, if you could tell simply by looking at his clothes. They were silky, black, obviously material that was too expensive for the commoners to obtain.

She watched as the male pulled something from his pocket, holding it in his gloved hand. Her eyes landed on the object in his hand - a silver pocket watch with a golden gem in the center. She turned on her heel, heading down the alleyway she was hidden in and continued down a series of alleys at a brisk pace. She turned one more corner, and continued down the path until it led back into the main district, people bustling all about.

She peeked out of the alleyway, her blue eyes searching the people before she found the old man she had spotted from before, walking towards her direction, his pocket watch back in his pocket.

Lets get started, She smirked and emerged from the alleyway, pulling her hood over her head. She headed toward the man, her head kept low but her eyes on the man. As she neared him, she bumped into him.

"A-Ah, my deepest apologies, sir!" She said weakly, her head low.

The elder man glared at her and shoved her away. "Get off me, street urchin!" He said, looking down at his clothes, a few of the friends he was with were glaring at Ryuko as well. "Tsk, you've gone and dirtied my clothes..." He grumbled to her before walking away.

Ryuko looked at him apologetically until he was out of ear shot, a glare appearing on her face. "Ass," she grumbled under her breath as she dusted herself off. She pulled her hand out of her cloak, a cocky smirk dancing on her lips as she looked down at the silver pocket watch in her hand. "Anyway, that was a little too easy." She sighed to herself, watching the way the pocket watch gleamed, even on the cloudy day.

"H-Hey! My pocket watch! It's missing!"

Ryuko peeked over her shoulder to see the old man looking around frantically before he turned back in her direction. "You! Give me back my pocket watch, you thief!" He called, heading back to her with his angry friends in tow.

"Ah crap, caught already? I'm losin' my touch." She grumbled under her breath as she hid her face from the men. She stuffed her prize into the pocket of her breeches before she bolted down the nearest alleyway, slipping down a few more until she was sure that she had lost the men. With the coast clear, Ryuko leaned against the wall, pulling her hood from her head. She wiped some dirt off her face as she pulled the pocket watch out again, looking at it with a small smile.

With a soft sigh, she stuffed it back in her pocket and pulled her hood back on before she headed out again. She slipped down a few more alleyways until she reached a different

district, one with less people. She stepped out onto the main path, moving up the path as she headed into the residential area.

She reached one of the smaller homes, knocking on the rickety door. A few moments passed and the door opened, finding a thin woman in a green dress, accompanied by a young boy, maybe no more than four years old. "Oh, it's you..." The woman mumbled in surprise, getting a closer look at Ryuko's face.

Ryuko smiled, pulling out the pocket watch. "I believe this belongs to you?" Ryuko said, placing the silver pocket watch into the woman's hand. The woman gasped, looking down at the pocket watch before she clutched it tightly in her hand, holding it close to her heart.

"Thank you so much. I didn't think I was ever going to get it back..." She murmured. "Oh yes!" She reached into her apron, pulling out a small woven bag that was about the size of her hand. She placed the bag in Ryuko's palm, closing Ryuko's fingers over it.

"I almost forgot your payment... I wish I could give you more, but..." The woman trailed off.

Ryuko shook her head, giving the woman a small smile. "It's no big deal, really. I've never been nit picky with price. All that matters to me is that I got the job done," Ryuko said, kneeling down to ruffle the young boy's hair. The boy giggled and Ryuko reached into her pocket, pulling out a warm loaf of bread that was wrapped up in a napkin.

She placed it in the boy's hands, ruffling his hair again. "Don't waste that, alright?" Ryuko said as she rose to her feet. "I'd better get going," she mumbled and began walking off, waving at the woman and her child from over her shoulder.

"Alright, thank you once again!" The woman called before she pulled the boy inside, closing the door behind her. Ryuko smiled softly before she headed back down the path, kicking along a few dirt clods as she went.

Ryuko pulled her hood off as she entered the bustling pub, the place reeking of alcohol. She crinkled her nose as she looked around at all the patrons in the store.

"Oi, Ryuko! Welcome back!" They all hollered to her in greeting. Ryuko smiled at them and waved as she passed by them before she headed to the counter, spotting the familiar blue haired bartender.

"Water for me, Mikisugi." Ryuko requested as she settled herself on the bar stool.

"Ah, Ryuko-kun." Aikuro greeted. "Back so soon?" He inquired as he handed her a glass of water. The girl downed it, a pleased sigh passing through her lips.

She nodded, rolling her neck. "Yeah. The job was really easy. My customer was really glad to get that item back though, it must have been a memento or somethin'." She shared, running her finger over the rim of the glass. She looked up to see Aikuro holding his hand out to her expectantly.

"Speaking of which, your rental is due." He smirked at her.

Ryuko rolled her eyes and fished out her payment from her last job. She opened it, pouring the coins into Aikuro's open palm. "Damn, you sure are demanding, old man. I haven't even finished my drink yet..." She grumbled, watching as the blue haired male counted the coins in his hand.

"Hey, paying me is the least you could do considering that I'm letting you eat and sleep here for free. Not to mention that I let you run your business here, Ryuko-kun." Aikuro said, dropping half of the coins back into Ryuko's bag. "Good work today, buy yourself something nice." He teased with a grin.

The dark haired girl rolled her eyes as she tied the bag up, stuffing it into her pocket. "Stingy old man," she grumbled with a smirk.

"I'm not much older than you, Ryuko-kun..." Aikuro frowned at her.

She smirked up at him, downing the rest of her drink. "You're kidding right? You're ancient, you might as well teach me the history of the world yourself. You lived through most of it, didn't you?" She snickered, as Aikuro shot her a dirty look.

"Matoi,"

Ryuko looked to her side to see Tsumugu, the other bartender of Aikuro's pub. Tsumugu jutted his thumb in the direction over his shoulder, pointing to the table in the back corner where she did most of her "work".

"You've got a customer," Tsumugu informed as he slipped behind the counter, beginning to serve the other patrons their drinks.

Ryuko nodded as she hopped off the stool. "Thanks!" She called over her shoulder as she approached her table. She slipped into her side of the booth, her hands folding over the table. She eyed her customer curiously.

He was a young man, long dark hair pulled into a ponytail, maybe in his mid-twenties. He looked up at her with his piercing green eyes, a slight smirk on his lips. "So, you must be the little lady that I've heard so much about." He noted with a grin, eyeing her up and down. Ryuko shot him a glare, crossing her arms over her chest.

"Let's cut to the chase, what do you need from me?" She inquired, her eyes scrutinizing.

"Word on the street has it that you do any job for money."

"Depends on the job," Ryuko replied. "What exactly did you have in mind?"

The male tossed a small pouch onto the table, the pouch landing with a heavy thud followed by the clinking of coins. Ryuko eyed the bag in surprise, seeing a few gold coins spill from the open pouch. "I need a ring to get for my lady back home and she deserves the best things in life, I like to spoil her, what can I say." The man said with a nonchalant shrug.

Ryuko gave him a slight smirk as she reached for one of the coins, biting down on it to see if it was real. Much to her surprise, it was. She flipped the coin in her fingers, eyeing it. "With this kind of cash you could buy her as many damn rings as she wants. I'm guessing you have a particular ring in mind?" Ryuko asked as she looked back up at the male.

He grinned and nodded. "You catch on quick. There is a particular ring that I had in mind." He trailed off, his grin dancing on his lips. "It's a real pretty one, with a silver band and a green gem on it." He informed with a grin.

The man pointed to the bag of coins on the table. "Consider that a payment in advance. You'll get the rest when you bring the ring to me."

The dark haired girl eyed him curiously. "Where is the ring?" She asked finally, pursing her lips as she spotted the man's grin grow in response.

"The Sanageyama estate, huh?" Ryuko mumbled to herself as she looked up at the vast manor. She placed her hand on the stone walls, cold from the night time temperature. She pursed her lips. "These damn wealthy families sure do know how to go all out, don't they?" She looked up at the menacing wall, probably three times her height.

A grin spread onto her face as she cracked her knuckles. "Hm, the more difficult, the more fun it is." She huffed to herself as she began climbing the wall to the closest window, using the stones that stuck out more than the rest as footing.

"Alright, if I were an expensive ring, where the hell would I be?" She mumbled to herself as she looked around at the closest windows. Her blue eyes landed on an open window, on one of the higher stories. She smirked, heading and climbing for that direction. As she neared the window, she pulled herself onto the tiled roof of the manor. She walked on the balls of her feet, keeping low as she neared the window. Carefully, she lowered herself and peeked into the window. When she didn't see anyone in sight, she slipped inside, landing carefully on her feet.

She dusted her hands off and pulled her hood down, looking around the empty bedroom for anything that may have the ring she was looking for. Quickly and quietly, she moved toward the dresser, looking through all the cases that were resting atop it. She flicked one open, her eyes widening when music began to play. She cursed under her breath, quickly closing it when she realized it was a music box.

She bit her lip, looking around as she tried to listen for anything outside her door. A long moment passed and she released a breath, realizing that no one was coming. She looked through more of the casings, her blue eyes landing on a small wooden box on the night stand by the bed.

A smirk appeared on her lips as she moved toward it and carefully opened it. A confident smirk appeared on her lips as she spotted the silver ring with the green gem sitting inside. "Excellent," she whispered, eyeing the ring in her fingers. She set the box down, closing it.

"If I were a jewelry kinda girl, I wouldn't mind wearing this." She said with a small smirk. She pocketed the ring, her eyes widening as the door opened. She turned her attention to the door, her blue eyes landing on a young man with green hair, maybe a year or so older than her.

He had on a white jacket with black lapels, a green vest beneath the jacket. He had on a pair of matching white trousers with a black stripe doing down the side length of his legs, and a pair of black boots. Around his waist was a black belt, two swords attached at his side.

The male's green eyes narrowed at Ryuko, his hand placed threateningly on one of his swords. "Who are you?" He asked, his voice low as he closed the door behind him.

Ryuko nearly smirked, pulling out her dagger that was hidden behind her back. "I don't think that really matters right now. I'm terribly sorry for disturbing you on such a nice night." She smirked at him.

The male frowned at her, unsheathing his blade. "I'll ask again, who are you?" He repeated, pointing his blade at her.

"Aw, your big sword versus my tiny blade? I don't think that's very fair." She said teasingly. Much to her surprise, the male unbuckled his second blade, tossing it to Ryuko. She caught the sword and sheath, looking down at it in surprise.

She chuckled under her breath. "Chivalrous son of a..." She looked back up at him.

"Wanna dance then, pretty boy? Fine." Ryuko said with a cocky smirk as she slipped her dagger away, instead pulling out the sword. "The name's Ryuko Matoi."

"I'm Uzu Sanageyama, second son of the esteemed Sanageyama family." He narrowed his eyes at her. "I think it'd be in your best interest to put back whatever it was that you stole from my belongings." He advised her.

Ryuko chuckled lightly. "I'll be honest with you, pretty boy, I haven't heard a damn thing about you or your family before until just a few hours ago."

Ryuko narrowed her eyes as she heard frantic yelling outside the door. She clicked her tongue against her teeth. "You hear that? The guards already know you're here. I think it'd be best if you returned what you stole and turned yourself in." Uzu advised her.

"I don't think so, pretty boy." Her eyes hardened as Uzu advanced on her, his own eyes narrowed. She deflected his attack, stepping back as she blocked another of his strikes. She slipped to the side, narrowly dodging another of his strikes before she attacked, striking at his heart.

He quickly rose his blade back to his person, deflecting Ryuko's attack before he knocked her back. He parried another of her attacks before he stepped back from her, his eyes hardened.

Ryuko smirked at him, grinning from excitement. "You're pretty light on your feet, pretty boy!" She teased, twirling the sword in her grasp. "Listen, I'd love to stay here and okay with

you more, but I really do have to get going." She said, smirking at him.

She almost chuckled at the way he practically growled at her. Much to her surprise, the door opened again, revealing another green haired male. This one a little older than the pretty boy standing in front of her. Presumably, the older one was the elder brother. "Uzu, are you-" he stopped as his eyes landed on Ryuko and Uzu, the latter turning to look at his brother.

Quickly, Ryuko sheathed the blade and hopped onto the window sill, the two brothers immediately turning to her. She peeked over her shoulder, grinning at Uzu. "I'd love to stay and meet the rest of your family, but I gotta go, pretty boy." She called over her shoulder as she winked at him before she made a quick escape.

"Pleasure doin' business with ya." Ryuko said as she and her client switched items, the ring for her payment. She pursed her lips, weighing the pouch in her hand as she watched the man leave. She checked the gold coins inside, checking to see if they were real. Still to her surprise, they were. She yawned, stretching her arms as she headed toward the counter. She dropped the pouch on the counter in front of Aikuro.

"This should cover for the rest of the year, right?" She asked with a yawn as she turned to leave. She stretched her arms as she headed for the stairs, heading for her room.

Aikuro's eyes widened as he looked in the bag. "R-Ryuko-kun, this is too much!" He called to the girl, catching her attention before she headed into the stair well. "Don't you want any of your payment? You did even the money after all." He said to her.

She looked back at him and shook her head. She turned to him, patting the new sword and sheath at her side. "Nah, I got my pay from my job. You keep that, buy yourself something nice." She smirked before she headed to bed.

As she got to her room, she pulled off her cloak and scarf, placing them on the nearby table. She kicked off her boots and removed her dagger, taking her belts off as well to remove her new sword. She placed the dagger on the table and rested the sword against the side of her bed before she collapsed onto the bed in exhaustion.

Ryuko rolled into her back, staring up at the ceiling. She could still hear the faint noise of the loud, drunken men in the pub below. She smiled softly and reached for the sword, holding it over her. She ran her fingers over the smooth material of the sheath, her eyes gleaming at the way the white material seemed to shine in the moonlight that had slipped into her room from the window. She pulled the sword out slightly, just enough that she's able to see some of the blade. She blinked in surprise, seeing her eyes reflect in the material of the sword.

She smirked, sheathing the sword once more before she placed it back on the ground, resting it against the side of her bed. "That's one hell of a sword, pretty boy." She murmured to herself sleepily before she curled up, slowly slipping into slumber.

Uzu strode down the hall, a frown on his face and his mood foul from the lecture he had just received from his parents. He rolled his eyes.

Getting blamed for letting that damn thief get away... He bit his lip.

Okay, so maybe it was his fault.

He snapped out of his trance as he heard a few of the guards around the hall talking. He pressed himself up against the wall, not wanting to get caught hearing their conversation.

"That thief, I've heard of her." One guard spoke up.

"Same here. I hear she does whatever you her to do, you just have to make sure you have the money."

Uzu pursed his lips crossing his arms over his chest. That was all that he needed to hear.

He turned on his heel and headed for his room. As he got there, he shrugged off his jacket and closed the door behind him. He headed for the closet, pulling out a new change of clothes. He changed into a darker set of trousers and looser shirt. He pulled out a long dark cloak, one that came with a hood. He slipped the hood on and attached his belts and sword back onto his person.

He put a handful of gold coins into a woven pouch and slipped it into his pocket before he slipped out the window, heading out in the middle of the night.

Uzu bit his lip, keeping his head low. It was morning by the time that he had reached the town, the street already bustling with merchants and workers. He could feel the some of the people's eyes on him as he continued down the street, namely young women looking in his direction.

He wasn't used to this kind of attention. He looked up, his eyes widening as he spotted a wanted poster on the wall nearby him. His gray eyes examined the image that came with the poster, his eyes falling to the name on the paper.

Ryuko Matoi

He looked around before he grabbed the paper, pulling it off the wall. He took it with him, hiding it under his cloak as he headed back down the street.

His nose crinkled as he entered a pub, hoping maybe that they would know where the girl he was looking for was. He approached the counter, showing the blue haired man at the counter the paper. "Do you know where she is? Or where I can find her?" Uzu inquired.

He noticed the blue haired man's hesitation and he sighed in response. "I'm not here to arrest her. I need her services." Uzu informed.

The blue haired man nodded, still looking at Uzu oddly. He turned his eyes to the side. "Ryuko-kun! You have a customer!" He called. The man turned back to Uzu, pointing him over in the direction of the table in the corner. Uzu nodded gratefully and hurried over to the table where Ryuko was looking out the window, a look of nonchalance on her face.

Uzu slid into the booth across from her, pulling his hood down to show the girl his face. Ryuko turned to him, her eyes widening in surprise before she narrowed them at him. Before she could get a word out, Uzu placed the wanted poster on the table between them.

Ryuko's eyes flicked down to the poster, her eyes widening slightly. "What?! I'm only worth five thousand?" She grumbled in disbelief as she took the poster into her hands.

The green haired male eyed her curiously. "That's what you're worried about?" He asked under his breath. Ryuko let out a sigh and turned her attention back to Uzu.

"Look here, pretty boy, if you want your ring I don't have it anymore." She told him, crossing her arms over her chest. "And I ain't givin' your sword back either." She huffed.

Uzu blinked in surprise before he shook his head. "I don't need my sword back, I have my own. And I don't need the ring, I could care less about it." He told her. He took in a deep breath and looked back at her. "I need your services." He said to her.

Ryuko eyed him oddly, her lips pursed. "What exactly did you have in mind, pretty boy?"

"I've heard that you do any job for money." He said, bringing out the small pouch of gold coins. Ryuko eyed the bag for only a second before she turned her eyes back to the male sitting in front of her. "I want you to give me another life, one different from the one that I'm already living." He requested.

The dark haired girl pursed her lips. "What? Did ya want me to kill you or something?"

Uzu shook his head. "No, I mean..." He trailed off, his brows furrowing together as he tried to piece together his words. "I want a different life."

Ryuko rolled her eyes. "You said that already."

"What I mean is I want to do something meaningful with my life. I want to help people, that's what you do, isn't it?" Uzu inquired.

The dark haired girl pursed her lips, her brows knitting together as she thought back to all the jobs she did. *Theft, assassinations, escort missions...*

"Are you asking to be my partner, pretty boy?" Ryuko inquired, her brow quirked at the boy curiously. "I think you've got the wrong idea about me, pretty boy. Do remember that I stole from you not more than a few hours ago." She reminded.

"But I've asked around about you! There was a woman who said you had helped her, you returned a pocket watch to her that had been wrongfully taken from her." Uzu said to her.

"That's just one instance-"

"But you still helped someone." Uzu insisted. Ryuko groaned under her breath, pinching the bridge of her nose.

She looked back up at Uzu, noticing the determination flaring in his stupid, gray eyes. She rolled her eyes, drumming her fingers against the table. "Let me get this straight, you want me to give you a different life?" Ryuko asked with a small groan, her eyes looking into Uzu's. The male nodded and Ryuko sighed again.

"No."

"Wait, what-"

"No." Ryuko reaffirmed as she slid from the booth. She handed her wanted poster to Tsumugu for him to trash it as Uzu groaned and collected the pouch of coins before he followed Ryuko. He pulled his hood on as the girl exited the pub, heading out into the bustling streets. He followed after her, watching as she pulled her hood onto her head. His eyes looked around the streets, noticing that there were more wanted posters of her than before.

Uzu turned his attention back to Ryuko, spotting a few guards just a few stores down from where she currently was. Noticing that they were heading in this direction, Uzu hurried over to Ryuko's side and grabbed her arm.

"H-Hey-" Ryuko turned to him in surprise as he pulled her into the nearest alleyway. He pressed her up against the wall, hovering close to her. She glared at him, backing into the wall as she felt him move closer. "Damn, if anything, you're persistent-"

"Shh," Uzu shushed her, his eyes peering over to look back onto the main street. He closed the distance between them, hiding her face by his shoulder as he blocked her view from the street. She peered over his shoulder, spotting a few guards coming in their direction.

She frowned, turning her head away from the main street as she waited for the guards to pass them. She bit her lip, feeling Uzu's body brush closer to hers. "The coast is clear..." Uzu whispered as she turned to him, her blue eyes meeting his gray ones.

Ryuko bit her lip, not quite realizing how close they were until just now. She flushed, able to see the pores in his cheeks. "G-Get off of me then..." She grumbled, her voice softer than she would have preferred it to be. She looked back up at him as he backed up a few steps. "Why did you do that?" She inquired.

Uzu looked at her curiously. "Huh? Hiding you from the guards? I still need you, that's why." He told her.

The dark haired girl crossed her arms over her chest. "I'm not doing the job." She told him defiantly. Uzu looked at her in disbelief as she brushed past him, heading back into the streets. He reached out to her, but someone cut in front of him. He stepped back in surprise to find that the guards had returned, surrounding Ryuko.

"Ryuko Matoi, you're under arrest for stealing from the Sanageyama Estate. You're coming with us," One of the guards spoke up as he and his two other companions grabbed Ryuko.

"L-Let go of me, damn you!" Ryuko yelled as she struggled in their grasp, the guards taking her towards the meeting hall. Uzu sucked in his breath and emerged from the alleyway. He headed over to the guards, knocking one of the ones that was holding Ryuko by the arm. Ryuko turned to him in surprise, her eyes widening as Uzu turned his attention to the other guard that was still holding her.

He pulled Ryuko from his grasp, elbowing the second guard. "What are you-" Ryuko stopped short as Uzu pulled Ryuko behind him, pulling out his sword and sheath as a way to block the last guard who had swung his sword at Uzu.

Uzu shoved the guard back and turned back to Ryuko, grabbing her hand. "Go, go!" He yelled as he began to pull Ryuko along.

"Hey! Get back here! Stop them!" Uzu heard the guards yell behind them.

Ryuko stared up at Uzu in surprise before she shook her head, collecting her senses. She pushed herself past Uzu as she gripped his hand tighter. She looked over her shoulder to see the guards still chasing after them. She bit her lip as she pulled Uzu down the closest alleyway.

She pulled him along, leading the green haired male down a series of criss-crossing alleyways. Finally, she turned one last corner and headed into one of the doors. Uzu looked at her in surprise, following her in. Much to his surprise, they were in the pub from before. The blue haired bartender spotted them, looking at them in surprise.

"Ryuko-kun, what did I say about the back entrance-" Aikuro began.

"No time! We're not here, okay?" She called to him as she tugged Uzu along to the stairwell, the two of them ascending the stairs at a brisk pace. Uzu stumbled as Ryuko pushed him into her bedroom, closing and locking the door behind him. He watched her breathlessly as Ryuko hurried over to the window, peeking out of the curtains and to the streets below. With a huff, she pulled the curtains close and plopped down on her bed tiredly, pulling her hood off of her head.

Uzu bit his lip, placing his hand over his racing heart as he tried to calm his breathing, his hood falling off of his head. He looked over to Ryuko, his gray eyes meeting her blue ones. She was looking at him oddly, scrutinizingly.

"Why?" She breathed out as she sat up. "Why did you do that? Save me from the guards?" She asked.

The green haired male shrugged, finding himself at a loss for words. "I... I don't know, honestly." He admitted sheepishly as he tried to catch his breath. "When I saw you getting taken away, I... I don't know. I kind of just found myself moving." He told her.

Ryuko quirked her brow at him. She sighed and patted the empty space beside her on the bed. Hesitantly, Uzu sat down beside her, keeping a safe distance between them. "You moved on impulse, huh?" She chuckled under her breath as she turned to look at him, their eyes meeting again.

She flashed him a small smile. "You've got guts, pretty boy. I like that." She complimented as she leaned back on her hands, a soft breath passing her lips.

"Looks to me that I took on your request anyway, despite declining it earlier." Ryuko noted, looking up at the ceiling.

Uzu eyed her curiously. "What do you mean?"

She turned back to him, her small smile still on her lips. "You asked for a different life, right? You got it the second you saved me. You helped a wanted criminal escape from the law. You're probably wanted now, just like me." Ryuko informed him.

Uzu gulped, his fingers playing with the hem of his cloak. Ryuko looked at him curiously as she sat up. "A little upset with your results?" Ryuko inquired.

The green haired male shook his head and chuckled, surprising Ryuko slightly. "I just didn't expect to get my results so soon," He laughed and turned to Ryuko, a small smile appearing on his lips.

Ryuko chuckled under her breath, shaking her head. "Well, thanks to you, my life has been spared. Knowing all the crimes that I've committed, I probably would've been executed." Ryuko mused, shivering at the thought. She paused and looked up at Uzu, watching the male as he looked down at his cloak, toying with the hem of it.

"Hey, did ya know that helping a criminal escape from the law is punishable by death?" Ryuko questioned. Uzu turned to her in a slight surprise, his gray eyes widening. The dark haired girl grinned at him, patting his shoulder in a friendly manner.

"No worries, I'll let ya hide out here in the meanwhile. It's the least I could do since you helped me out and all." Ryuko offered.

Uzu nodded. "Ah, thanks." He mumbled.

Ryuko's blue eyes turned back over to Uzu. "What will you do after all this though? You can't go back to your family, you'll be wanted just like me." Ryuko mused.

The green haired male shrugged as he leaned back on his hands. "I don't know." He hummed as he looked up at the ceiling. He blinked, snapping himself out of his trance as he began to fish through his pockets. "Oh, right..." He mumbled under his breath. Ryuko watched him curiously as he scooted closer to her, their shoulders nearly touching as he pulled out his pouch of coins from his pocket. He turned to her, placing the pouch in her hand.

She weighed it in her hands, eyeing it, before she turned her attention back to Uzu. "Your payment, remember? You did what I asked." He said to her, folding his hands in his lap. He

sighed softly as he twiddled his thumbs. "As for what I'm gonna do after this, I'm not too sure." He admitted, his voice quiet.

An amused grin appeared on Ryuko's lips as she set the pouch down in the space between she and Uzu. The green haired male turned back to her curiously, their eyes meeting. "I haven't exactly completed your request to its entirety, but I'll take this as advanced payment." She mused, her grin dancing on her lips.

Uzu raised his brows curiously. "Advanced payment?" Uzu repeated, his voice holding an amused undertone. "That's all the money I have on me. I'm not too sure how I'm going to pay the rest." He told her.

"Pay with your life." Ryuko answered, poking the male in the chest, just above the area where his heart is. The dark haired girl grinned, tilting her head up to look at Uzu. He looked down at her curiously, but waited for her to continue her proposition.

"I hear you're lookin' for a job, pretty boy, or at least another way to make a livin'." She said quietly, grin still on her lips. "Word on the street is that there's a certain runaway criminal who has been thinking of moving and relocating their business." Ryuko shared with an eyeroll.

She pursed her lips. "I can't say for sure what's making them want to relocate, but let's just say that the law gets involved and they doesn't want to have to deal with that anymore." She said to him, her grin spreading when she noticed that Uzu's eyes were shining with interest.

"What I can tell you is that they're lookin' for a partner, maybe part-time, maybe permanent... They haven't decided yet." Ryuko shared. "Think you'd be interested, pretty boy?" Ryuko hummed.

Uzu pursed his lips, his brows furrowing in contemplation. "Hm... I think I'll have to pass. I don't know how I feel about working alongside this person," Uzu shared, turning his attention to Ryuko. She looked a little disappointed by his response and Uzu grinned at her, causing Ryuko to look at him oddly.

"To be quite honest, I'd rather work with you." He said with a grin, eliciting a laugh from Ryuko. "So, you're really thinking of relocating?" Uzu inquired as Ryuko leaned back on her hands.

The dark haired girl nodded, a small sigh passing through her lips. "Yeah, I'm wanted in the town and that'll make business a little more difficult. They know my face and yours too." She said, pointing to him.

"Where're you thinking of relocating then?" Uzu questioned, noticing the smirk on Ryuko's lips.

"I've got a place in mind..." She murmured, smirking up at the male.

Aikuro sighed, rubbing the back of his head. "So you're really going, huh? Alright, well I can't stop you." The blue haired male mumbled as he turned his attention to Uzu. "Take care of her alright? She gets a little reckless at times."

Ryuko flushed, turning to Aikuro. "H-Hey!" She grumbled indignantly.

Uzu chuckled and slung their bag of belongings onto his shoulder. "I'll keep an eye out for her." Uzu promised, turning his attention to Ryuko, a smile on his lips.

"Since you guys are leaving, I asked a friend of mine to give you a ride. You'll find him on the edge of town." Tsumugu informed, earning a grateful nod from Ryuko and Uzu. "You two better hurry before the guards start their morning rounds," Tsumugu told them. The younger pair nodded and bid their goodbyes before they headed up the path.

As they neared the edge of town, Ryuko turned her attention to Uzu, the latter glancing back at the town from over his shoulder. "You sure that you won't regret this?" Ryuko questioned.

Uzu shook his head, a small smile appearing on his lips. "I'll be fine. I'm just saying my final goodbyes, is all." Uzu replied. The dark haired girl nodded and turned back to the path, finding an old man, with a long beard and eyepatch, sitting on a horse-drawn carriage not too far from where they were.

The pair hurried over to the old man as he turned to them. "Ah, you must be the couple that Tsumugu told me about." The old man mumbled as he stroked his beard. "You've got your payment, correct?" He asked, holding his hand out expectantly.

Ryuko blinked in surprise. "Ehh? I wasn't expecting that you would ask for money..." She grumbled, pulling out her pouch of money.

"No need for coins, lass." The old man said, his good eye landing on the swords at their sides. "But your swords will do just nicely." He said, pointing to the white sheaths attached to their person. Ryuko huffed, and slipped her pouch back into her pocket as she began to unbuckle her sheath from her belt, Uzu doing the same with his own.

With a heavy sigh, Ryuko handed her sword over to the man. "I'd rather give you money..." She grumbled as she watched Uzu hand over his own sword.

Uzu chuckled, turning to look at Ryuko. "I didn't realize you were so attached to that sword." He noted with a grin.

"It was a top quality sword!" She defended, her cheeks red. "What about you? Those were your swords in the first place!" She pointed out.

"I have no sentimental attachment to them, so I don't mind." Uzu replied to her. The old man placed his brand new swords on the empty space beside him on the bench.

The old man turned back to Uzu and Ryuko. "Where'd you say that you wanted to go, lass?" The old man asked.

Ryuko turned back to the man. "Oh, the capital!" She replied.

The old man nodded and pointed to the wagon. "Hop aboard, kiddos. We'll be there in no time." He said, gripping the reins of the horses. The young pair nodded and headed for the wagon, finding bales of hay in the back of the wagon. Ryuko blew out some air, a frown on her lips before Uzu helped her up into the wagon. The two of them moved toward the back, finding a small section with no hay.

The pair sat down beside each other in the cramped space, their shoulders touching as Uzu set their bag down at their feet.

"We should be in the capital by noon," the old man said.

"Thank you!" The pair said as the wagon began to move.

Ryuko stirred, her eyes opening as she felt the wagon stop. "We're here, lovebirds!" The old man called to them.

Yawning, Ryuko rubbed the sleep from her eyes as she raised her head slightly. She groaned lightly, feeling her lower back ache from the position she was sitting in. "Oi, wake up... We're here..." Ryuko grumbled as she nudged Uzu beside her. She turned to him, feeling his cheek slide off the top of her head and her eyes widened as she found herself face to face with the sleepy eyed Uzu.

The green haired male's nose bumped against hers drowsily, his eyes widening as he realized their proximity. He backed up a bit, rubbing his eyes sleepily as Ryuko averted her gaze.

"Uh, thank you, sir!" Uzu called as he and Ryuko hopped out of the wagon, their bag slung onto Uzu's shoulder. The old man waved goodbye to them before he ushered his horses forward, heading off to who knows where.

Ryuko and Uzu turned their attention to the capital, their eyes widening slightly from surprise at seeing just how big the capital was. Snapping herself out of her trance, Ryuko turned to Uzu, nudging him along as she began to head toward the main street. "Come on, first thing's first, we'll need to find a place to stay..." Ryuko said to Uzu, her eyes scanning the capital. Uzu followed close behind Ryuko, his eyes looking around at all the merchant stands in the main street.

The dark haired girl looked around, her eyes landing on a nearby merchant stand. She walked up to it, Uzu following behind her curiously. She eyed the items on display, her eyes gleaming with interest at the assortment of daggers and swords on the stand. Ryuko smirked, her eyes landing on a dagger with a dark green sheath.

She looked behind her, making sure that Uzu wasn't paying attention before she turned to the merchant, pointing to the dagger with the dark green sheath. "I'll take this one." She said with a grin, pulling out the appropriate amount of coins. Once she and the merchant made the trade, Ryuko turned to Uzu as they made their way back onto the main pathway.

Ryuko turned to Uzu, holding out the dagger to him. "Here's to a new life," she said with a grin.

Uzu blinked in surprise before he took the dagger into his hand, a grin appearing on his lips. "Ah, thanks. I'm lookin' forward to it."

FIN.

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